

# Lesson plan 1

## What is climate justice?

### **Purpose:**

Pupils understand the difference between climate change and climate justice.

### **Lesson outcomes:**

- Pupils will be able to articulate what climate justice is.
- Pupils will be able to provide examples of climate injustice.
- Pupils will have engaged in spiritual reflection on their relationship to climate justice.

# Before you begin:

It is important to acknowledge the uncomfortable truth at the heart of climate justice: that wealthy countries in the global north hold responsibility for driving climate change. In teaching about climate justice to young people it is fundamental to make clear that individuals, and especially children, are not to blame for climate change. Climate change is a result of how our society has developed over time and how it is currently structured. No one should be shamed for climate change, yet we should all recognise that we are all part of the system that has perpetuated this injustice. As part of this system, it is our shared responsibility—both as individuals and as communities—to use our voices and actions to leave the world a better place than we found it.

For some children, discussions around environmental destruction and climate change can be extremely upsetting and anxiety-inducing. When planning your session, use these tips to limit anxiety:

- Avoid 'end of the world' and 'last chance' framing.
- Be intentional and careful about the images and language that you use.
- Avoid 'save the world' messaging that places the burden for sorting out climate change on children and young people. For example, messaging like 'recycle more to save the world' is inaccurate and places the responsibility for fixing this problem on children.
- Be clear that world leaders have already committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions which are the main cause of human-made climate change. Many countries, including the UK, have committed to a target for 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions within a few decades. ('Net zero' means 'overall zero'. It is not possible to totally eliminate all sources of emissions, although this should be the aim as far as possible, so some will need to be captured with new technology or offset with actions like tree planting.)

- Reassure children with the important message that the urgent need for changes in the way we live is not all negative. The future will be different, yet reaching net zero doesn't just mean losing certain things from the world as it is now because they are unsustainable. Change means shaping a different world—one that is in balance with nature. What that future looks like is not yet defined, and the generation of young people living through this transition to a net-zero society will get to play a role in shaping this new world. New frontiers of innovation, technology, creativity and exploration will open up as priorities shift and entrenched systems are forced to change. When the world is being reimaged and rebuilt there is a window of opportunity to address inequalities and shape a society that is not only more respectful of our dependence on nature, but also founded on principles of social justice and respect for life, diversity and equality of opportunity. Change brings opportunity, and the result could be a more beautiful, fairer and healthier world for all of us.



# Teachers' notes:

This Letters for Creation lesson plan focuses on climate justice: the issues underpinning the climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on those least responsible for causing it.

This lesson is intended to be used as an educational backdrop to the Letters for Creation project, or it can be used as a stand-alone lesson on climate justice. By completing this lesson, our goal is that children and young people will gain enough understanding of climate justice to speak and act prophetically. This means using our voices, and our actions, to show a better way.

Climate justice is about making sure that as we do the important work to heal our planet, we listen to and include communities living in poverty who have been affected by climate change. Climate justice is also about making sure that future generations inherit a healthy and sustainable world. Climate change connects with lots of issues: wealth and money, gender, ethnicity, land and age. All of these connections are about justice at their heart.

Our hope is that young people will be able to envision what a more just world looks like and consider the actions needed to create it. Acting prophetically means that we address people in power to demand action that shows love and justice for others. It means challenging our own communities to live out values of love, peace, dignity of all people and justice in our daily lives, as well as working together to make sure the world is a better and fairer place for everyone – no matter where they live.

This lesson plan includes many suggested ideas and activities to help the pupils you work with to explore the issue of climate justice. You know the children and young people you work with best, and should adapt the activities as you see fit. The session does include some faith language which can easily be adapted if needed. The activities offered could fill up a longer session if you wanted to dedicate more time to the subject. However, you can also pick and choose individual activities if you want to run

the lesson in an hour. If a general introduction to climate change is needed for the young people you are working with, you may want to start with the [Together for Our Planet resources](#) and Christian Aid's [Fumes or Futures game](#).

Begin the lesson by showing an introductory video linked below, then complete the first two activities as a whole group. The rest of the session is designed to be completed as a carousel, including a range of activities to set up on tables. Small groups can move around the tables to complete the activities in turn.

**Introductory video:** [Climate Change on the Front Lines, Solomon Islands](#) (BBC)

# Group activity 1

## Climate language

### Purpose:

This activity will help children and young people begin to explore the differences between climate change and climate justice language.

Climate justice is an easily overlooked part of the climate change conversation. If we want to truly understand the problem and find genuine and sustainable solutions, however, it is fundamentally important that we also explore the justice issues at the heart of climate change. This activity helps young people recognise that when we talk about climate justice our language points to things that are unfair about climate change, while language about climate change points to the science of the causes or effects.

1. **Print and cut out the statements below. Prepare one full copy of the statements for each small group of pupils.**
2. **Invite pupils to read and discuss each statement, then organise the statements into two categories: climate justice statements or climate change statements.**
3. **Review the answers using the notes for discussion as a prompt.**

Climate Justice Statements	Climate Change Statements
People living in countries with the highest rates of poverty are suffering the worst consequences of climate change.	Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide into the air, causing the planet to heat up.
Climate change will impact young people more than old people.	Climate change is leading to a loss of natural life.
In some circumstances, climate change can impact women and girls more than men and boys.	Climate change will affect everybody.
Rising sea levels will have a bigger impact on people who live on the Pacific islands than those living in landlocked countries.	The sea levels are rising due to climate change.
Countries with greater wealth have burned more fossil fuels than the countries who have less wealth.	Many human activities cause climate change such as transport, agriculture and how we heat our homes.

## Notes for discussion:

You may be asked why climate change has disproportionate impacts on different groups of people. Below are some brief explanations:

**Children, young people and future generations** will be affected by climate change more than older generations as they will have to live with the consequences of climate change within their lifetimes. Older generations have reaped the benefits of an economy rooted in high rates of consumption and carbon emissions at the expense of others and are unlikely to have to live with the consequences in the same way. Even though scientists have, for a long time, warned us of the problems caused by excessive carbon emissions, some business leaders and politicians have been guilty of ignoring the warnings.

**Women and girls** are often the worst affected by climate injustices, as climate change harms their economic and social opportunities. Statistically women and girls make up the majority of the world's population living in poverty. As climate change puts more pressure on resources overall, women most often lose out because of existing inequalities. For example, in many rural-poor economies, women and girls do most of the farming to produce food for their families. In these places, climate-related weather events such as droughts and floods have a massive impact on their ability to provide food. Likewise, women and girls also tend to be the ones responsible for gathering water. Climate change means longer and often dangerous journeys every day as water sources dry up, which then reduces opportunities for girls to get an education.

**Poorer communities** and countries with high rates of poverty are more vulnerable to climate change. Countries with less resources do not have the same financial capacity as other countries with more wealth to mitigate against the impacts of climate change. These countries and communities have less power to influence decision making and are not always included meaningfully in the decision-making processes at national or global levels.

It may be helpful to consider the injustice at the heart of the issue. *Why are these communities and countries in poverty?* One of the reasons that many richer nations in the world are wealthy is that they have controlled and extracted resources from other nations around the world over time - and in many cases, this continues to this day. A very famous and shocking example of historical exploitation of people in other nations is the slave trade. But even today, examples of exploitation can be found, for example in supply chains that do not respect human rights or pay people properly, or in companies that do not pay the amount of tax they should in the countries where they operate.

# Group activity 2

## Behind the image

### Purpose:

This activity will help children and young people make connections between images of climate change and the root causes driving climate change.

We see so many images of the impacts of climate change every day, but these pictures do not tell the full story. It's quite common to see an image of a flood or forest fire, for example, but we don't often go further to connect these images to their root causes, such as the deepening patterns of extreme weather events, excessive consumption of dirty energy or intensive farming. In this activity, we will look at images and peel back the 'layers of the onion' to explore the whys of different types of climate change.

1. **Use the four images provided below which depict different impacts of climate change. Show the class each image and ask pupils to share in their own words what story the image is telling.**
2. **For each explanation given, ask the follow-on question, 'Why is this happening?', guiding young people to dig deeper into the root causes.**

For example, show the picture of the forest fires. When a pupil shares that the picture shows forest fires that have been getting worse each year, ask why the forest fires have been getting worse. If a pupil responds that climate change is making areas hotter and drier and the hot dry seasons are longer, ask why the hot season is getting longer. Continue until the young people reach the core of the climate issues presented.

- **Image 1: Wildfire**— Although wildfires are natural in some ecosystems, climate change is increasing the severity and frequency of wildfires as a result of longer and worsening dry seasons.
  - **Image 2: Rising sea levels in the Pacific islands**— Climate change is causing sea levels to rise. In the Pacific islands, these rising sea levels are causing islands to erode, shrink and in some cases disappear entirely.
  - **Image 3: Flooding and drought**— Having both flooding and drought is a two-fold challenge caused by climate change. Countries like Kenya can struggle with long periods of no rain and then can face the challenge of too much rainfall when it does come.
3. **Close the activity showing the final image:**
    - **Image 4: Fossil fuel usage** — This image shows more explicitly part of the systemic problem behind climate change. Fossil fuel usage is one of the main contributors towards climate change and can be seen as a root cause of many of the impacts recognised in the other images.



1.



Image credit: Getty Images

2.



Image credit: weatherwatch.co.nz

3.

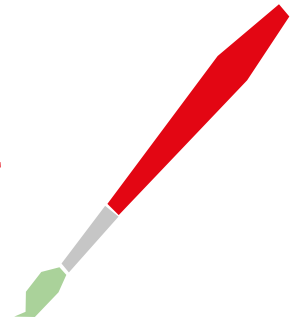


4.



Image credit: @chriseboutilier via unsplash.com

# Carousel activity A (for primary classes) Global climate cartography



## Purpose:

Children recognise the link between wealthy countries and carbon emissions.

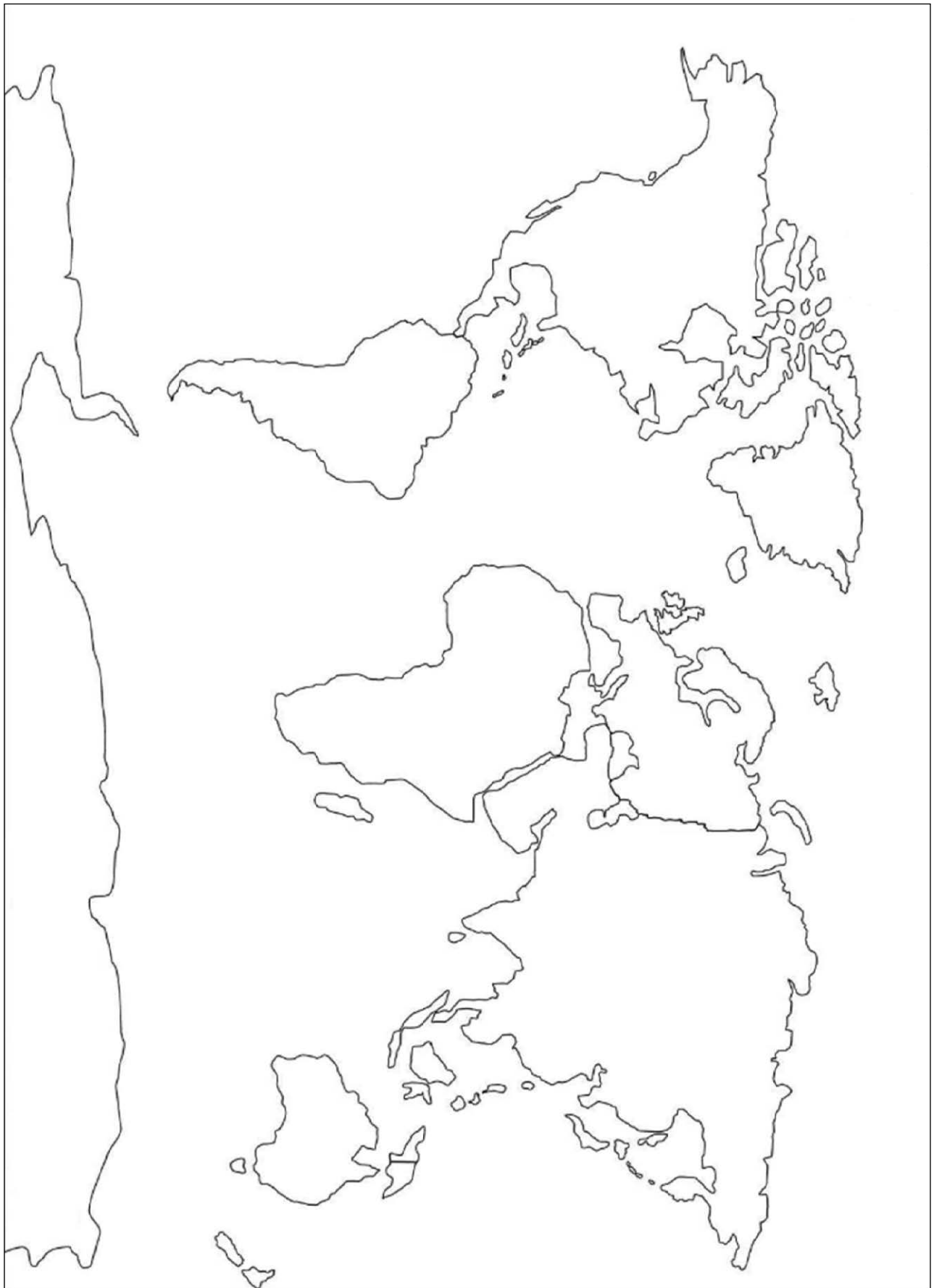
1. **Print copies of the maps provided for each child. Ask the children to look at the resource maps and colour in their own maps as follows:**
  - Using one colour, shade the places in the world that are (and have been) already most affected by climate change.
  - Using a different colour, shade the places in the world that are (and have historically) contributed the most to climate change.
2. **As children look at the provided maps and colour in their own, ask them to discuss what they have noticed. Are there any patterns they have spotted? Are there any questions that they have about what the maps have shown them?**

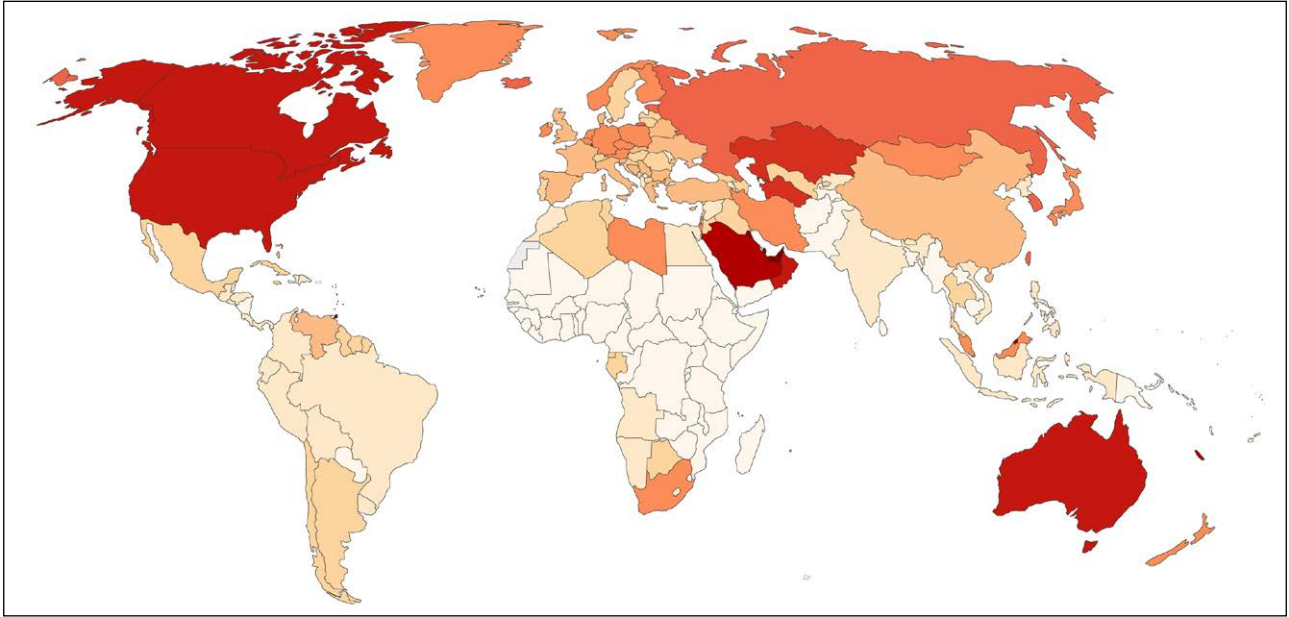
## Teachers' note:

Check in on the group to see what they have identified. Prompt children to recognise that the large areas of the world that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts are not the same areas that are the greatest contributors to climate change.



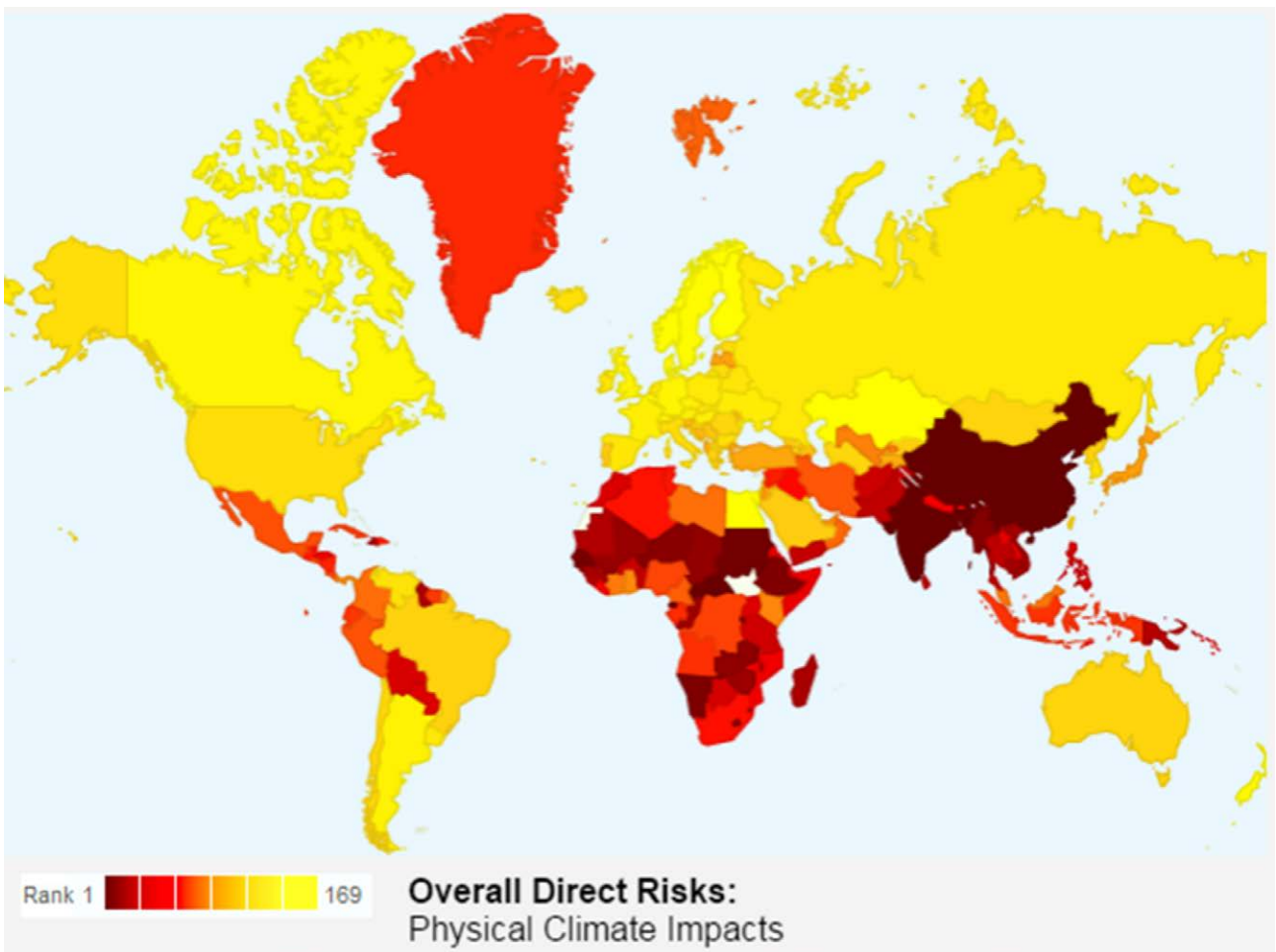
## World map





Source: OWID based on Global Carbon Project; Gapminder and UN [OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/](https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/) • CC BY

This map shows coloured in red and pink the places where people are contributing the most towards climate change.



Credit: Centre for Global Development

This map shows in red the areas of the world most affected, and most likely to be affected, by climate change.

# Carousel activity A (for secondary classes) The link between wealth and emissions

## Purpose:

Young people recognise the link between countries with wealth and greatest carbon emissions.

1. Print and cut out both the set of country names and per capita emissions numbers, and the set of country names and GDP numbers below. Prepare one full set of cut outs for each pupil or small group of pupils, keeping the emissions and the GDP sets separate.
2. Using the first set, ask the pupils to pair the countries with the correct carbon emissions numbers and arrange them left to right, highest to lowest. (ie. with the highest emitting country on the left to the lowest emitter on the right). When completed, have the pupils check with you if they are correct.
3. Once pupils have all the correct countries paired to the correct carbon emissions per capita and ordered left to right, then provide the set of cut outs of the GDP per capita. Ask students to pair the GDP per capita with the correct country, then for this set, to arrange the countries from right to left, highest to lowest (ie. the countries with the lowest GDP on the left, and the highest on the right).
4. Ask the group to discuss what they noticed about the exercise. What conclusions can they draw from the information they have drawn together?



Country	Carbon emissions per capita, 2016
Bangladesh	0.5
Senegal	0.7
Philippines	1.2
Bolivia	2.0
United Kingdom	5.8
China	7.2
United States of America	15.5

Country	GDP per capita, 2019
United States of America	65,297
United Kingdom	48,484
China	16,804
Philippines	9,302
Bolivia	9,110
Bangladesh	4,964

Data from World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/>

### Teachers' note:

Young people should notice that at the completion of the pairing and sorting, the two lines are basically in reverse order. This demonstrates that the nations which produce the most carbon emissions are also the wealthiest. This is not a coincidence. Many of the things that have allowed these nations to create wealth—trade, industry and the exploration and exploitation of natural resources—have created carbon emissions. Likewise, the lifestyles enjoyed by many people in nations with greater wealth are also heavily polluting ones. For example, foreign holidays, personal cars, meat-rich diets and heated homes all contribute to the relatively large carbon footprint of people in nations with higher GDPs.

Pupils may ask about China, which has a reputation as the world's biggest polluter. While China currently produces about double the United States' overall emissions, this is largely because China has many more people (nearly 1.5 billion, compared to 328 million in the US). As shown in the activity, China produces approximately half the emissions of the United States per person. Because the United States has been burning fossil fuels for longer, over time, the US has produced twice as many emissions overall. For example, in 1960, the United States was producing 16 tonnes of carbon per person per year, the UK was producing 11 tonnes of carbon emissions per person per year and China was producing 1 tonne of carbon emissions per person per year. Not all of China's emissions are related to consumption within China. China produces a lot of products consumed elsewhere in the world which isn't always reflected in our calculations of global emissions.

According to the BBC's Our World in Data, from 1750 (when emissions are thought to have been virtually zero) until the end of 2018, China produced about 210.20 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>. The US produced 404.77 billion tonnes in this same period. In recent years, US carbon emissions have been on a downward trend as it moves away from coal towards natural gas and renewable energy.

There is now pressure on all countries to develop in ways that benefit people without harming the planet.

# Carousel activity B

## Local climate cartography

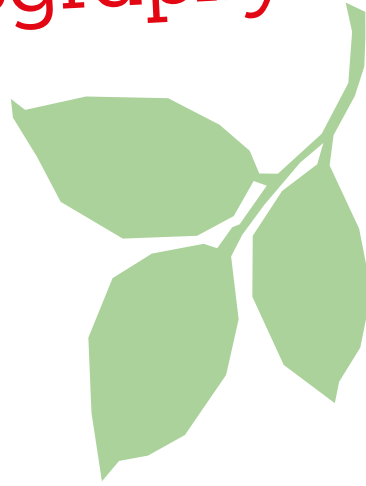
### Purpose:

Young people will begin to think locally about possible impacts, solutions and opportunities to engage on climate change and climate justice.

- 1. Invite young people to draw a map of their local area showing places they care about, places they spend time and places they recognise as climate positive or negative. The map does not need to be accurate.**
- 2. On their map, ask young people to mark any improvements that they would like to see, or ideas they have for improving their local environment.**

For example, young people may draw a local park that has wildflowers for bees as a climate-positive location. Alternatively, they may mark an area that would be great for wildflowers as an idea for improving the local environment. They may also show areas that have high traffic as climate negative, which can cause health concerns for local residents.

- 3. Ask young people to consider if there are areas or groups of people in their community who might be more affected than others? Ask them to explain who and why. For pupils struggling to consider local justice issues (this can be quite hard) prompt them by asking if they as children, and future generations are inheriting the best, healthiest and sustainable version of their local area? If not, prompt them to consider what that future vision could look like.**





# Carousel activity C

## ‘The world as it is’ or ‘The world as it should be’ cartography

### Purpose:

Children and young people identify things in the world that are unfair and unjust, and begin to build a vision of a more just world ‘as it should be’.

1. **Using the provided worksheets, invite young people to spend this time independently, quietly considering the world as it is today, and what they think the world should be like.**
2. **Using words or images, have the pupils fill in the two sets of boxes with their thoughts:**
  - The world as it is:  
**Good** – Things that are good about the world that I want to keep.  
**Bad** – Things that are bad about the world that I would like to change.
  - The world as it should be:  
What I think the world should be like.

### Teachers’ note:

To supplement this activity, you may consider choosing a video from our suggested resources that showcases some of the people already working to make the world a better place. Screening this type of video alongside the activity helps young people recognise that by taking part in campaigning and activism they are part of a wider movement of people—they are not alone.

<b>The world as it is: How do you see the world right now?</b>		<b>The world as it should be: What do you want the world to be like?</b>
<b>Things that you don't like and would want to change:</b>	<b>Things that you like and want to stay as they are:</b>	

# Carousel activity D

## In the image of God

### Purpose:

Young people consider how the Christian faith leads Christians to care for our global neighbours as people made in the image of God.

1. Share **the creation story**, explaining that **this story leads Christians to believe that we have a shared responsibility to care for, show love to and seek justice for all of humanity as people made in the image of God. These values of love and justice for others are not exclusive to Christianity and should resonate with those of all faiths and none.**
2. Invite the young people to draw pictures of themselves, leaving blank space around the self-portrait. In the space around their picture ask pupils to write down characteristics of themselves that they think point to the Christian belief that people are made in the image of God (for example: they show love and compassion, they are creative, they have good relationships, they are forgiving, etc.) Pupils may also write examples of what they think makes them who they are (for example: their love of football, love of music or art, or having a pet that they care for, etc.)

### Wrap-up activity:

(To complete as a whole group)

The final activity is an opportunity for pupils to share their learning and reflections with the wider school community.

Invite pupils to make a **people chain**. Thinking about their and feelings on climate justice, ask pupils to think about people elsewhere in the world who are on the frontlines of climate change. You may use the prompts below to help them reflect on their learning:

- What message do you want to share with your fellow pupils?
- What does climate justice mean?
- Why is it important?
- Why do people elsewhere in the world matter?
- How would you finish the sentence 'I think climate justice looks like . . .?'

During and following the discussion have the pupils decorate and write their messages on the people chain. Once the people chains are complete, consider having the class or small groups create a display in a shared area of the school, or share what they have learned in a school assembly.

